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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HADID (Algeria)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 128: UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM (continued) (A/48/30 and Corr.1; A/C.5/48/4, A/C.5/48/17 and A/C.5/48/18)

AGENDA ITEM 129: UNITED NATIONS PENSION SYSTEM (continued) (A/48/9 and A/48/517; A/C.5/48/18)

1. Mrs. SHEAROUSE (United States of America) reaffirmed her delegation's strong support for the United Nations common system and welcomed the decision of the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA) to resume its participation in the work of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC).

2. Her delegation supported the general thrust of the recommendations contained in paragraph 85 of the ICSC report (A/48/30 and Corr.1) concerning the comprehensive review of the pensionable remuneration of staff in the General Service and related categories. The General Assembly should now rectify the anomalies in the present methodology. The United States shared the reservations stated by other delegations concerning the Commission's recommendation that 66.25 per cent of net pensionable salary should be used for determining the pensionable remuneration, as well as the concerns stated in paragraph 70 of the report. The implications for the rest of the system must be examined before the General Assembly took a decision on the point.

3. In principle the United States could support the recommended increase of 3.6 per cent in the base/floor salary scale for staff in the Professional and higher categories but noted that the adjustment of the scale was one reason for the budgeting of excessive amounts for staff assessment. Staff assessment rates should be recalculated annually to ensure that the budgeted amounts were no more than was necessary to reimburse staff members subject to national taxation.

4. Since many Geneva staff members resided in France, French price data should be included in future cost comparisons for the determination of post adjustment, possibly on a weighted basis. The United States delegation supported the recommendation for a revised staff assessment scale, set out in annex X to the report, for staff in the Professional and higher categories. If the General Assembly adopted the revised scale, there should be a corresponding reduction in the budget submission for the biennium 1994-1995.

5. It was regrettable that the Commission had been unable to recommend a system of special occupational rates, as requested by the General Assembly in resolution 47/216, owing to a lack of cooperation by the organizations.

6. The Commission had found that General Service salaries in New York exceeded those paid by the local employers surveyed, but recent budgets had not included measures to eliminate the excess salaries, nor did the note by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/48/4) indicate any action to implement resolution 45/241 in that respect. The United States delegation recommended that payment of the pending cost-of-living adjustment for General Service staff in New York should be postponed until the requirements of resolution 45/241 were met. It

(Mrs. Shearouse, United States)

would also like confirmation that the results of the survey of best prevailing conditions of service for staff in the General Service and related categories in Paris were being implemented.

7. The United States noted with concern the Commission's intention to proceed with phase II of its study of the highest-paying national civil service before seeking the views of the General Assembly on completion of phase I, as requested in resolution 46/191. The United States believed that comparable levels of remuneration should be maintained for the executive heads of the organizations and therefore regretted the decision of the Council of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to approve a significant increase in the salary of its Director-General. It was also concerned about the recent judgement of the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization (ILO) which had affected General Service salaries in Geneva and would like to know the degree to which the Commission had been involved in defending its use of established survey methodology and the implications of the decision for the common system.

8. Mr. HOSSAIN (Bangladesh) said that his delegation attached great importance to the work of ICSC and reaffirmed its confidence in the Commission and its support for the common system. It also welcomed the decision of CCISUA to resume its participation in the Commission's work and regretted the continued absence of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA).

9. Bangladesh supported the Commission's recommended increase of 3.6 per cent in the base/floor salary scale for staff in the Professional and higher categories since it would re-establish the alignment with the comparator scale. It hoped that the recommended introduction of the income replacement approach, using 66.25 per cent of net pensionable salary, for determining the pensionable remuneration would remove the anomalies caused by income inversion. The question of a language incentive for staff in the Professional and higher categories was an important one, and the Commission had concluded that the current arrangements in the United Nations should serve as a model for other organizations. Bangladesh supported that approach and believed that it would be cost-effective to allocate resources for language training.

10. Bangladesh noted the work initiated by the Commission in the areas of job classification and training, evaluation of training, and performance management, which were important elements of a performance-oriented management culture. It looked forward to the proposals which the Commission would make in 1994 together with its review of conditions of service in the Professional and higher categories.

11. Mr. VARELA (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Latin American countries of the Rio Group, said that the conditions of service of United Nations staff were an issue of great importance since they affected the functioning of the whole common system. As the Secretary-General had said, the staff of the Organization was its most valuable resource. The most complex issue before the Committee was the ICSC recommendations on the pensionable remuneration of staff in the General Service and related categories, in particular the application of the income replacement approach to both the General Service and Professional categories with a view to eliminating anomalies. The Rio Group believed that the proposed

(Mr. Varela, Chile)

measures should be introduced gradually and supported the Commission's proposals contained in paragraph 85 of its report. It also endorsed the intention to study all the aspects of the application of the Noblemaire principle and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session.

12. The countries of the Rio Group noted that the revised methodology for the determination of the cost-of-living differential between New York and Washington took into account the views expressed by the Committee at the previous session. They agreed to the proposed increase of 3.6 per cent in the base/floor salary scale since it would mirror the adjustments granted by the Government of the United States to government employees in January 1993.

13. On the question of the expatriate entitlements of staff living in the home country and stationed elsewhere, the Rio Group noted that United Nations personnel in Geneva had appealed to the Administrative Tribunal against alleged discriminatory treatment. It therefore believed that consideration of the question should be postponed while it was sub judice.

14. The countries of the Rio Group supported the Commission's recommendation that the organizations of the common system should adjust their practices with regard to a language incentive for staff in the Professional and higher categories to the practice of the United Nations and they endorsed the decision not to make any changes in the current post adjustment system to take into account the differences in working hours between New York and Geneva. They also attached importance to the ICSC review of the general methodology for surveys of best prevailing conditions of employment at non-headquarters duty stations, and they recommended approval of the revised scale of staff assessment drawn up in response to General Assembly resolution 47/219.

15. The Commission should continue to work on issues not directly related to remuneration such as the relationship between job classification and human resources management, improvement of training programmes and the status of women, and the Rio Group looked forward to the report on performance appraisal and management to be prepared in the context of the study of the application of the Noblemaire principle.

16. Mr. WOLFFHECHEL (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that they reiterated their firm support of the common system, for only with a single unified international civil service could the Organization meet the new demands made of it. In that connection the deplorable practice of national subsidies must be abolished.

17. The Nordic countries supported the Commission's recommendation for a 3.6 per cent increase in the base/floor salary for staff in the Professional and higher categories and its recommendation that, where language-incentive schemes for such staff seemed a useful tool, the arrangements currently in effect in the United Nations should serve as a model. They also supported the recommendations concerning the pensionable remuneration of staff in the General Service and related categories.

(Mr. Wolffhechel, Denmark)

18. Increased coordination between the Commission and the organizations of the system was a prerequisite for successful adaptation to the new demands. The Nordic delegations were pleased that CCISUA had decided to resume its participation in the Commission's work and urged FICSA to do likewise. Since personnel policies and human resources management, productivity and accountability were now given increased attention in the public sectors of the Nordic countries, they welcomed the Commission's remarks on its work in those areas.

19. Mr. MADDENS (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, reaffirmed the support of the members of the Union for the common system, which alone could guarantee the United Nations motivated and competent personnel. Member States must promote the attractiveness of United Nations jobs and guarantee the integrity of the common system. The staff of the United Nations warranted the greatest respect, especially at a time when they were being called upon to play increasingly visible and dangerous roles.

20. The common system offered the participating organizations many advantages and had become the cornerstone of coordination in the United Nations. The European Union re-emphasized the importance of the relationship between ICSC and the General Assembly. The Commission was an expert technical body but it was for the General Assembly to take the political decisions. Total respect for article 6 of the ICSC statute, concerning its independence, was therefore fundamental.

21. The European Union supported the Commission's recommendations concerning the comprehensive review of the pensionable remuneration of staff in the General Service and related categories and was glad that they had been adopted by consensus, with CCISUA participating in the informal working group. It also supported the recommendation for an increase in the base/floor salary scale with effect from 1 March 1994. However, no changes should be made with respect to the expatriate entitlements of staff living in the home country and stationed elsewhere. Only a small number of persons were affected, and it would be illogical to change the existing system for geographical reasons alone. The Commission's recommendation concerning a language incentive for staff in the Professional and higher categories should be adopted, but when the Commission next took up the issue it should bear in mind the case of staff members whose study of a second official language amounted to study of a third language. The revised staff assessment scale for the Professional and higher categories also deserved support, especially as it would help to reduce the accumulated surplus in the Tax Equalization Fund and therefore the budget submission for the biennium 1994-1995.

22. The countries of the European Union welcomed the Commission's request to ILO that it should bring its practice with respect to extra steps beyond the salary scale into line with that of the common system. With regard to the application of the Noblemaire principle, they also welcomed the Commission's intention to extend its comparisons to other international organizations, but they were not sure that comparisons should be made with non-universal organizations. As it suggested in its report, the Commission should determine whether such organizations lent themselves to valid comparisons.

(Mr. Maddens, Belgium)

23. The European Union drew attention to paragraph 2 of resolution 47/216 G, in which the General Assembly decided to revert to the consideration of the conditions of service of assistant secretaries-general and under-secretaries-general and equivalent levels at the earliest possible opportunity. The time had come to take a decision on the matter.

24. Ms. ROTHEISER (Austria) said that the Austrian delegation attached importance to the involvement of all interested parties in the work of ICSC and welcomed the resumption by CCISUA of its dialogue with the Commission. It hoped that FICSA would follow suit. It was a matter for satisfaction that the Commission's recommendations seemed to be generally acceptable to the staff representatives, as indeed they were to the Austrian delegation.

25. Austria supported the recommended 3.6 per cent increase in the base/floor salary scale for staff in the Professional and higher categories, but it questioned the discontinuation of the practice of granting career appointments, for it made the Organization a less attractive employer. In that connection, it fully supported the Commission's work on the application of the Noblemaire principle. It also welcomed the Commission's return to the consideration of non-salary matters.

26. Austria had reservations about a language incentive for staff in the Professional and higher categories. Staff should be proficient in two official languages at the time of recruitment, and the mother tongue as well as the language required for the job should be excluded from consideration in any language incentive scheme. The introduction of a language incentive by some of the organizations could weaken the common system. On a related issue, the Commission was right to request ILO to bring its practice with respect to extra steps beyond the salary scale into line with that of the common system.

27. The Austrian delegation was pleased that both the Commission and the Joint Staff Pension Board had agreed on a new methodology for calculating the pensionable remuneration of staff in the General Service and related categories. The use of a grossing-up factor of 66.25 per cent would reduce the income inversion anomaly and provide for a smooth transition to the new system. On the subject of the Pension Fund, it was to be hoped that the currently successful investment policy would be continued in the future, but further information would be welcome concerning the Fund's actuarial imbalance in dollar terms.

AGENDA ITEM 125: JOINT INSPECTION UNIT (continued) (A/46/34, A/47/34, A/47/669, A/47/755, A/48/34, A/48/83 and Add.1, A/48/129 and A/48/383; A/C.5/45/75 and A/C.5/46/17)

28. Mrs. RODRIGUEZ (Cuba) said that the growth in the activities undertaken by the international community meant that there was a greater need than ever before for the independent views of the Inspectors of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in improving management and methods. Accordingly the Fifth Committee should focus on improving the productivity of the Unit, a question which, as noted by the Advisory Committee (A/47/755, para. 4), could be addressed without modifying

(Mrs. Rodriquez, Cuba)

the basic principles underlying its functions. Her delegation also agreed with the Advisory Committee that JIU should focus on the inspection and investigation functions specified in its statute. In that connection the Unit should formulate a formal set of inspection standards, to be annexed to the statute.

29. She noted the comment in the JIU report (A/48/34, para. 22) that no request would be made for the time being for strengthened staffing. Nevertheless she endorsed the Advisory Committee's view that an increase in computer resources should be considered in the context of the proposed programme budget.

30. Her delegation supported the preliminary work programme of the Unit for 1994-1995 and beyond, but wished to see the inclusion of a study on recruitment and hiring policies in the Secretariat. The study should encompass the question of promotions, taking into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution, including in the case of higher-level posts. Her delegation also agreed with the proposals contained in paragraph 40 of the JIU report. The low rate of compliance with JIU recommendations was attributable to a failure by governing bodies to pay proper attention to them, a situation which must be rectified. Closer coordination was needed between JIU and ACABQ and the Board of Auditors.

31. Mr. DIPP GOMEZ (Dominican Republic) said that his delegation supported the JIU view that the effective use of resources and coordination within the United Nations system were essential in tackling the serious problems confronting mankind. The addition of new Inspectors had broadened the Unit's base and contributed new perspectives.

32. The report on an integrated library network (A/47/669) made pertinent recommendations, in particular to establish an inter-Library panel, aimed at improving efficiency. Equally, the comments of JIU on interpretation services were valuable. His delegation noted the JIU report on accountability and oversight (A/48/420), in particular, recommendations 1 and 2 regarding the establishment of an Assistant Secretary-General for Inspections and Investigations and the creation of a higher-level post with audit, evaluation and investigation authority.

33. Various participating agencies had indicated that they had difficulty in complying with JIU recommendations owing to their general nature and a lack of resources. Executive heads should contact JIU Inspectors regarding the specific cost of compliance with their recommendations. Lastly, his delegation noted the conclusion of the Advisory Committee that it was not advisable to establish an additional institutional link between ACABQ and JIU.

34. Mr. RIVA (Argentina) said that the question arose of how the Joint Inspection Unit fitted into the push for reform and efficiency in a United Nations faced with increasing responsibilities. The importance of the Unit had been underestimated by many, a failing which should now be made good as its significance as a supervisory organ with global responsibilities grew. In particular, an appropriate budget level was necessary, as was participation by all Member States in considering its reports. Full use should be made by the system of the Unit's services.

(Mr. Riva, Argentina)

35. While his delegation supported the Unit's programme of work, a more systematized approach should be taken. Participating agencies should make a greater effort to complement the Unit's activities, and executive heads should ensure that its recommendations were implemented. In that connection agencies must be involved in analysing the Unit's programme of work if they were to play a full role in implementing its recommendations. He welcomed the involvement by CPC in the Unit's programme and functioning. If necessary, recourse should be had to international experts to ensure technical soundness. It followed that the requisite financial resources must be made available, possibly from extrabudgetary resources.

36. His delegation paid tribute to the quality of documents before the Committee at the current session. In particular, the report on accountability and oversight would allow in-depth consideration of the supervisory function with a view to strengthening administrative and financial credibility and increasing the Organization's ability to discharge its responsibilities. Lastly, his delegation welcomed the consideration by JIU of peace-keeping operations.

AGENDA ITEM 168: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/C.5/48/5)

37. Ms. ROTHEISER (Austria) said that it was with deep regret that her delegation noted the fatalities of staff members in the performance of their duties and the high death toll among United Nations peace-keepers. Effective measures must be taken to close any gaps in the existing security system, and the United Nations Security Coordinator must seek to reduce the risk for staff on peace-keeping and humanitarian missions.

38. Her delegation was also concerned about staff members who were missing or under arrest. Staff members released from detention should be fully supported by the Administration in their reintegration into professional life and adequate care must be given to dependent family members of staff killed or detained in the line of duty. In that regard she welcomed the information provided by the Coordinating Committee for Independent Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System.

39. Given her Government's strong commitment to fully respecting the privileges and immunities of United Nations officials, she was surprised that Austria was mentioned in document A/C.5/48/5, in connection with the arrest of a Mr. Huetter, who, according to the report, had had the legal status of a UNIDO expert on mission at the time of his arrest. In fact it had not been evident to the Austrian Government that Mr. Huetter was anything more than an Austrian businessman with a business relationship with UNIDO, and for that reason the Austrian authorities had not informed UNIDO of his arrest. Notwithstanding any unresolved legal issues relating to his consultancy status and thus the applicability of the privileges and immunities provided for under the Charter, the Austrian authorities would have taken such status into account had it been known to them. In any event Mr. Huetter was no longer in custody.

40. Mr. JADMANI (Pakistan) said that the note by the Secretary-General on respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and related organizations (A/C.5/48/5) and his special report entitled "Security of United Nations operations" (A/48/349-S/26358) brought out clearly the need for the Organization to adopt appropriate measures for ensuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel. His delegation was deeply concerned that United Nations personnel were being subjected to attacks in the performance of their duties. They were increasingly required to operate in extremely difficult circumstances and the increase in the number of peace-keeping operations, particularly in situations of conflict, exposed personnel of all categories to greater physical risks. The international community could not accept such attacks.

41. The current initiative in the Sixth Committee on the subject of safety and security of United Nations personnel was most timely. His delegation also welcomed the Secretary-General's intention to include security matters in the planning of all peace-keeping operations, as well as the other measures contemplated by him in that regard. It was unrealistic, however, to expect the Secretary-General to adopt new measures for the safety and security of United Nations personnel unless adequate resources were provided. The Secretariat should provide fuller justification for the provision of such additional resources.

42. His delegation wished to express its deep appreciation to all the men and women who, in very trying circumstances and even at the risk of their lives, were serving in peace-keeping operations all over the world. He saluted their dedication, courage and commitment.

43. In connection with the question of equitable geographical representation of Member States in the Secretariat, he recalled that the presentation of information on that subject to the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly was linked to the report on the outcome of the discussions held by an open-ended working group during the resumed forty-seventh session. His delegation looked forward to the report of the coordinator in that regard.

44. Mr. NDOBOLI (Uganda) joined previous speakers in deploring the increasing number of fatalities among United Nations personnel, including those serving in peace-keeping operations. Member States should support the efforts of the Secretary-General to ensure the security of United Nations personnel, while recognizing that the primary responsibility for such security rested with host Governments. The Government of Uganda respected that understanding and would support any useful proposals for improving the security of personnel of the United Nations system.

45. His Government deeply regretted the killing of Mr. Wandayo, an employee of UNICEF. The relevant authorities had been seized of the matter with a view to bringing the culprits to justice. The case was an isolated one which did not reflect the real security situation in Uganda or the security of United Nations staff serving there.

46. The proliferation of peace-keeping missions and the hazardous conditions under which personnel often had to perform their duties called for security matters to become an integral part of the planning for each peace-keeping

(Mr. Ndoboli, Uganda)

operation. Communications and staff training must be commensurate with the task. His delegation was ready to discuss the provision of resources for improvements in that direction.

47. The comments by the Coordinating Committee for Independent Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA) (A/C.5/47/17) drew attention to the need to do much more in terms of raising awareness among the Governments and peoples concerned in order to reduce the risk to peace-keeping missions. The necessary mechanisms needed to be worked out in that connection, with Member States playing a role in the process.

48. His delegation shared the view expressed by the delegation of Cuba regarding the biennialization of the personnel agenda item. The Fifth Committee and the General Assembly should be consistent in their decisions.

49. Mrs. DODSON (Director of Personnel) expressed appreciation for the support expressed by members of the Committee for the efforts of the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations system to secure full respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of those organizations.

50. In response to the statement of the representative of the Sudan, in connection with the question of the taxation of Sudanese nationals who were officials of the United Nations, she said that the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), which had drawn attention to the matter, had been asked to provide clarification. A reply had been received from UNIDO headquarters stating that the issue had been brought to the attention of the Sudanese authorities in a note verbale of 12 August 1993, to which no answer had so far been received.

51. The representatives of the United States and Pakistan had asked for information regarding any additional resources that might be required to implement new security measures. That information would be made available as part of a report of the Secretary-General currently being prepared on resource requirements for the security of United Nations operations in response to a request from the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC). The United States delegation had also asked about measures of an administrative and humanitarian nature in respect of detained staff. An investigation was under way in the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) into what the Organization actually did for such staff. At the policy level, the United Nations insisted on immediate access to detained staff and an explanation for their arrest or detention and, as a minimum, the provision of adequate medical care. In reality, the Organization was often faced with the refusal of Governments to provide such access or to give any acceptable explanation and, without access, the level of medical care provided had to be taken on trust. The real point of the question was what the Organization did to support those in detention and their families and to reintegrate them into the Organization after release. OHRM had so far concerned itself mainly with such contractual issues as how long salary should continue to be paid, at what level, and to whom. That administrative aspect was being reviewed and new instructions would probably be issued before the end of the month. On the humanitarian side, no systematic approach was as yet being taken. Ad hoc measures were adopted, duty station by

(Mrs. Dodson)

duty station. OHRM intended to make a global survey of the issue and to develop policies and guidelines. It was hoped that such guidelines could be completed within the next six months.

52. She welcomed the statement by the representative of Afghanistan that a team was investigating the incident involving the death of United Nations staff in Jalalabad in February 1993. She hoped that the findings of the investigation would be made available to the Secretariat in due course. She also welcomed the offer of the representative of Ethiopia to investigate the reported detention of Mr. Kassu Asgedon of the World Food Programme.

53. She thanked the representative of Austria for her clarification and said that the information would be officially transmitted to UNIDO. She was glad to hear that Mr. Huetter was no longer in custody.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

54. The CHAIRMAN said that item 120 (Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors) would have to be postponed to the resumed session of the General Assembly, owing to the fact that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) was not in a position to make recommendations on those reports.

55. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) asked whether it was essential for the Fifth Committee to have the Advisory Committee's review of the findings of the Board of Auditors before it took up the item. One of the Fifth Committee's main functions was to approve in a timely manner the performance of the various bodies of the system. The report on voluntary funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/48/5/Add.5), in particular, was important from the point of view of the budgetary process. He suggested that the Fifth Committee might take up the item, as it had done the reports of the International Civil Service Commission and the Pension Fund, without waiting for the views of ACABQ, and deal with the Board of Auditors directly.

56. Ms. ROTHEISER (Austria) suggested, as a compromise, that consideration of the item might begin and those delegations which wished to speak at once could do so and the rest could wait until the reports of ACABQ were available.

57. Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) endorsed the proposal. There were many items on the Committee's agenda under which reports from ACABQ were still awaited. While the Committee might, as was proposed, conclude its general discussion of item 121 (Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations) on 19 November, delegations should be given an opportunity to speak if necessary after the conclusion, once the relevant ACABQ reports were available.

58. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) asked whether there was any possibility that the Advisory Committee's report on item 121 would become available during the session. If that was not likely, the Committee should perhaps take up the item without benefit of the Advisory Committee's views.

59. The CHAIRMAN said that he was informed that it was unlikely that ACABQ would be able to consider the financial reports in the next few weeks. It was also his impression that ACABQ did not feel that it was particularly urgent to do so.

60. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) said that, in that case, he would support the Canadian proposal. The proposal of Austria might result in the waste of valuable meeting time.

61. Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) asked how the Bureau planned to proceed in respect of all those items for which only some of the documents needed were available.

62. The CHAIRMAN said that the Bureau had drawn the Committee's attention to the matter precisely because it wished to have the opinion of members, on a case-by-case basis, on the issue of whether or not the Committee should wait for the reports of ACABQ before it took up particular agenda items. He took it that there was no objection to revising the tentative programme of work in line with the Canadian proposal.

63. Mr. FRANCIS (Australia) said that his delegation would be happy to proceed with item 120 without a report from the Advisory Committee, but he would point out that a similar situation prevailed in regard to item 124 (Improving the financial situation of the United Nations). He noted that ACABQ had already expressed its views on most of the points made in the report of the Independent Advisory Group (A/48/460). He suggested that, unless the Secretariat planned to provide more information, that item should be taken up without further delay.

64. The CHAIRMAN said that he had learned very recently that the Advisory Committee had decided, in the light of the content of that report, that, although it would have preferred to be given time and opportunity to report on it to the Fifth Committee, it felt that it was not absolutely essential for it to do so. If the Fifth Committee decided to go ahead, the Advisory Committee would submit no report on that document.

65. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) suggested that the debate on agenda item 125 (Joint Inspection Unit) should be concluded the following week and the Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit given an opportunity to make her concluding remarks at that time. He asked whether the Committee could be informed when the programme budget would be introduced and the general discussion started on that item.

66. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Bureau, in consultation with the Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit, should decide on the most appropriate time for concluding the debate on that item. He took it that the Committee wished to take up items 120 and 124 the following week.

67. It was so decided.

68. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider its programme of work for the remainder of the current session. ACABQ had advised the Bureau that its report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 would be ready for distribution during the week beginning 6 December. The Bureau therefore wished to propose that the general debate on the proposed programme

(The Chairman)

budget should begin on 24 November with an address by the Secretary-General and the introduction of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) by the Chairman of that Committee. The Bureau proposed further that the general debate should be completed by 6 December. The Committee should then take up the proposed programme budget section by section. He took it that the Committee agreed with his proposals.

69. It was so decided.

70. Mrs. RODRIGUEZ (Cuba) said that, while she agreed with the timetable proposed by the Chairman, the Committee's section-by-section consideration of the proposed programme budget would greatly benefit from the views of the Main Committees on the narratives of each section.

71. The CHAIRMAN said that he had been informed that the Committee was not required to send the narratives of the budget to the Main Committees for their comments. That procedure was required only for the medium-term plan.

72. Mrs. RODRIGUEZ (Cuba) drew the Committee's attention to section II, paragraph 1, of resolution 46/189 in which the General Assembly noted with concern that, for most sections of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993, programmes of work had not been reviewed by intergovernmental bodies. The absence of such reviews would slow down the Committee's work, especially in view of the large number of proposals submitted by the Secretary-General, many of which did not have the necessary legislative mandates. Her delegation was concerned over that situation and reserved the right to revert to the issue of consultations with intergovernmental bodies when the Committee came to consider the relevant draft resolutions.

73. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) said that the report of the Secretary-General on the methodology for monitoring and reporting the programme performance of the United Nations would be very helpful to the Committee at the current stage of its work and he therefore hoped that it could be completed and made available as early as possible.

74. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) said that he supported the interpretation of the competent authorities of the procedures for discussing and approving the proposed programme budget. Nevertheless, he shared the concern expressed by the Cuban delegation about the lack of involvement by intergovernmental bodies in that process. On the question of the lack of legislative mandates for certain of the proposals of the Secretariat, his delegation was not aware of any proposals which lacked such mandates. In any case, he was confident that the Committee would be able to find solutions to such problems, should any arise.

75. Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia) said that he shared the views of the representative of Cuba on the importance of the narratives of the proposed programme budget. His delegation considered that the report of CPC was an essential input for the Committee's work. Only in cases where CPC or the Fifth Committee identified any substantive problem relating to the absence of legislative mandate or to programmatic aspects of the proposed programme budget should the Committee seek the advice of the relevant substantive body.

76. Ms. PEÑA (Mexico) said that the General Assembly had provided for programmes of work to be reviewed by intergovernmental bodies. Such a practice, as the Cuban delegation had correctly pointed out, would help to speed up the work of the Committee, particularly since many of the proposals which it was required to consider appeared to lack legislative mandates.

77. The CHAIRMAN said he agreed that the Committee should consult with the Main Committees if there was uncertainty as to the existence of a proper legislative mandate. Such referral, however, should never be with the intention of establishing ex post facto the necessary legislative mandate. Even so, the proposal presented a number of practical difficulties. In past years, the Fifth Committee usually awaited the completion of the work of the other Main Committees. He wondered if it would be wise to request those Committees to defer the completion of their work in order to reply to the queries of the Fifth Committee, especially during the Christmas holidays.

78. Mrs. RODRIGUEZ (Cuba) said that her delegation could accept the proposed programme of work only on the understanding that, in the case of budget proposals for which there was no legislative mandate or which required changes in the normal procedures for programme planning, the Committee would have before it the views of the relevant substantive organs.

79. The CHAIRMAN said that he would take it that the Committee accepted the proposal of the Colombian delegation.

80. It was so decided.

81. The CHAIRMAN said that, in order to make sure that a programme budget was adopted before Christmas, the remaining items on the Committee's agenda would have to be postponed to the resumed forty-eighth session. While those items included the item on the administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peace-keeping operations (item 138), the Committee would recommend to the General Assembly that it grant commitment authority to the Secretary-General so as to ensure the continuity of some of the peace-keeping operations.

82. With regard to the items currently being considered, namely, item 125 (Joint Inspection Unit), item 127 (Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations), item 128 (United Nations common system), item 129 (United Nations pension system), and item 168 (Personnel Questions), informal consultations would continue and be completed by the time the Committee began the section-by-section consideration of the proposed programme budget.

83. He proposed that the Committee delay its consideration of questions relating to the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 (item 122) and the report of the Economic and Social Council (item 12) until it had received the relevant reports of ACABQ.

84. Mr. KOULEBA (Ukraine) said that the postponement of item 138 until the resumed session would create difficulties for the financing of peace-keeping operations. A way should be found to consider item 138 before the end of December 1993.

85. Mr. ACAKPO-SATCHIVI (Secretary of the Committee) said that the situation with regard to documentation was not encouraging. Only two of the relevant reports under the item had been issued so far. The remainder were currently at various stages of preparation.

86. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) said that the Committee was facing a very difficult task through no fault of its own and the choices before it were rather unpleasant. While his delegation supported the thrust of the Bureau's proposals, it believed that it was too early for the Committee to commit itself to granting commitment authority in respect of individual peace-keeping operations.

87. Mr. YEGOROV (Belarus) said that it was still unclear to him which documents were still outstanding on item 138, and particularly on item 138 (b). It should be possible to consider that item during the current session. His delegation accordingly reserved its position on the programme of work as a whole until the question of consideration of item 138 was resolved.

88. Mr. DAMICO (Brazil) said that his delegation supported the programme of work proposed by the Chairman. The problems of the Committee were not of its own making and, while he understood the concerns of the delegations of Ukraine and Belarus, it would be difficult for the Committee to consider isolated aspects of item 138.

89. Mr. ZAINUDDIN (Malaysia) wished to know whether the delay in the preparation of the Secretary-General's report on the financing of the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia meant that the related agenda item (item 159) would also be deferred until the resumed session.

90. Mr. ACAKPO-SATCHIVI (Secretary of the Committee) said that the financial aspects of the International Tribunal would be considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995. Until such time, however, as the relevant reports of the Secretary-General and of ACABQ were completed, the item as such could not be discussed.

91. The CHAIRMAN said that, in view of the fact that the delegations of Ukraine and Belarus insisted on their position with respect to item 138, the Bureau would discuss the matter and make further proposals to the Committee the following Tuesday. He took it, however, that the Committee was in agreement with all other aspects of the programme of work which he had outlined earlier.

92. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.